

Basin and Range National Monument

Q&A

Where is the Basin and Range National Monument?

The Basin and Range National Monument comprises 704,000 acres of public lands managed by the BLM in Lincoln and Nye counties in Nevada, about two hours north of Las Vegas. The monument includes Garden Valley and Coal Valley; the Worthington Mountains, Golden Gate Range, Seaman Mountains, and Mount Irish Range; the Hiko Narrows and White River Narrows; and the Shooting Gallery rock art site.

What is the effect of the President's proclamation?

The President's proclamation designates federal lands in this area as the Basin and Range National Monument for the care and management of objects of scientific and historic interest and to help ensure that future generations can enjoy these significant lands as they are today. The area may not be disposed of by the United States and is closed to new extractive uses such as mining and oil and gas development, subject to valid existing rights. The proclamation also prohibits new rights of way across the monument, with certain exceptions. The proclamation does not affect hunting and fishing, livestock grazing, valid existing rights, water rights, or military use of the land or airspace. The national monument becomes part of the BLM National Conservation Lands and will be managed to maximize visitor services and appropriate public access. The designation does not include private lands.

Is the artwork *City* a part of the monument?

The artwork *City* is not presently a part of the monument but is located on private land located within the monument boundary. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art holds a conservation easement that ensures public access once the artwork is completed, no later than five years from now. The easement also ensures the protection of the artwork and prohibits incompatible or commercial development on other private lands in the immediate vicinity of the artwork. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art intends to donate the conservation easement to the United States. Upon the donation, the easement will be managed by the BLM as part of the monument.

What are the main development threats to this area?

The Basin and Range area has been studied for various development projects over past decades, including large-scale mining, oil and gas development, electric transmission, solar energy development, and various railroad lines. Current understanding of mineral potential suggests that the area is no longer home to significant deposits of valuable minerals. The Barrick Gold Corporation and Rockwood Lithium North America support the proposal. Oil and gas development in this area is highly speculative, with only a few exploratory wells drilled in recent years. Industry interest suggests that more promising resources exist to the north and northeast of the monument. Though initially considered for solar development by the BLM, the area was subsequently identified as an avoidance area by the BLM's Western Solar Plan. In a separate action, the BLM recently approved three projects within the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone in Nevada, approximately 90 miles to the southwest of the monument.

Is there significant oil and gas interest in this area?

Oil and gas development in this area is highly speculative, with only a few exploratory wells drilled in recent years. Industry interest suggests that more promising resources exist to the north and northeast of the monument. The proclamation honors valid existing rights, including active oil and gas leases.

How does the proclamation impact traditional ranching practices?

Both Garden Valley and Coal Valley have long traditions of responsible ranching operations and careful stewardship of the land. The proclamation allows grazing operations in the monument to continue under existing law, including use of motorized vehicles, construction and maintenance of water infrastructure, and construction of fences and other range improvements relating to grazing operations. The designation does not affect traditional grazing operations under existing laws while minimizing the threat of future incompatible uses.

How does the designation affect military uses of the land and airspace?

The designation does not affect military uses of the airspace and allows continued access for emergency response and training activities. The military will be able to continue to use the area and associated airspace in its training missions.

How does this designation affect the proposed Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository?

The Basin and Range National Monument does not impact consideration of the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository, though it does exclude one of five proposed rail alignments analyzed by the Department of Energy in 2008 to transport waste to the proposed Yucca facility. A broad coalition of Nevada lawmakers opposes the repository, and Congress has prohibited its further consideration through this fiscal year. More broadly, in 2013, the Administration released its Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel and High Level Radioactive Waste. The core tenant of this strategy is using a “consent-based approach” to establishing a repository.

How does the monument compare to other conservation areas in terms of size?

The Basin and Range National Monument is the fifth largest unit of the BLM National Conservation Lands and the second largest in Nevada. The area ranks behind sixteen National Parks and seventeen land-based National Wildlife Refuges.

How will the BLM incorporate local input into the monument management plan?

The BLM will undertake a monument planning process for the Basin and Range National Monument that will invite formal cooperation with the State of Nevada, local governments, and tribes and develop a management plan within three years. The plan will follow the normal open process with maximum opportunity for public input.

How does the designation affect wildland firefighting?

Wildland fire prevention, response, and restoration activities will continue in the monument, including prescribed burns, fuels treatments, firefighting, and reseeding as appropriate.

How does the designation impact public access?

The designation preserves and enhances public access, including for hunting and fishing, which continue to be managed by the State of Nevada. The designation precludes uses that would potentially restrict public access, including mining, oil and gas, and transportation rights of way.

How does the designation impact off-highway vehicle use?

The area is currently closed to off-highway vehicle use, and the designation continues this practice. The area contains a thorough network of graded gravel roads, and the proclamation sets that network as the baseline for motorized travel. The BLM may designate new trails for mountain bikes as part of its monument management plan.

Who supports Basin and Range National Monument?

Legislation to protect this area has been introduced by Senator Harry Reid and Congresswoman Dina Titus. Supporters include local elected and appointed officials from the City of Las Vegas, Nevada State Assembly, Reno City Council, Clark County School District, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Nevada Arts Council, and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. American Indian tribes including the Duckwater Shoshone and Moapa Band of Paiutes consider the area to be culturally significant and support its conservation. Representatives from major Nevadan and national businesses have written in support, including MGM Resorts International, Wynn Resorts, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Barrick Gold Corporation, Rockwood Lithium North America, Frias Holding Company, the Morton Group, and Tiffany & Co. Current and former executives and members of the boards of notable art institutions have expressed support, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Menil Collection, Dia Art Foundation, Kennedy Center, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Association of Art Museum Directors, Lannan Foundation, Nevada Museum of Art, Southern Nevada Museum of Fine Arts, Nevada Institute for Contemporary Art, and Las Vegas Performing Arts Center. Outdoors and advocacy organizations including the Conservation Lands Foundation, The Wilderness Society, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council, Progress Now Nevada, Outside Las Vegas Foundation, Nevada Conservation League, and Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada also support this proposal. Deputy Secretary of the Interior Connor attended a public meeting in Las Vegas hosted by Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) and Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-NV) on February 18, 2015, to hear from the public about several conservation proposals. The overflow crowd overwhelmingly supported protection of the Basin and Range area.